United Nations S/PV.4515 (Resumption 1)

Security Council

Fifty-seventh year

Provisional

4515th meeting

Friday, 19 April 2002, 10.45 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Lavrov	(Russian Federation)
Members:	Bulgaria	Mr. Tafrov
	Cameroon	Mr. Belinga-Eboutou
	China	Mr. Wang Yingfan
	Colombia	Mr. Valdivieso
	France	Mr. Levitte
	Guinea	Mr. Fall
	Ireland	Mr. Ryan
	Mauritius	Mr. Koonjul
	Mexico	Mr. Aguilar Zinser
	Norway	Mr. Kolby
	Singapore	Mr. Mahbubani
	Syrian Arab Republic	Mr. Wehbe
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Jeremy Greenstock
	United States of America	Mr. Negroponte

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

Letter dated 17 April 2002 from the Permanent Representative of Tunisia to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2002/431).

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02-34201 (E)

The meeting was resumed at 10.45 a.m.

Mr. Wang Yingfan (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The international community has recently made efforts to halt further escalation of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, as demonstrated by the three Security Council resolutions and the statement by the "quartet". Additionally, United States Secretary of State Powell went to the region to carry out mediation activities. Many countries, including China, have in their own fashion called on the parties to implement the Council's resolutions.

However, to our regret, there has not been any satisfactory change in developments in the occupied Palestinian territories. The Israeli army still refuses to withdraw and has intensified its siege of the Palestinian leader, Mr. Arafat, and of the Church of the Nativity. Bloodshed among innocent civilians continues.

The immediate withdrawal of troops by Israel is the deciding factor that will determine whether there can be a real change of course in the conflict. We support all efforts urging Israel to withdraw its troops.

The escalation of violent activities has created an extremely grave humanitarian situation. We find Israelis and Palestinians, as well as Chinese nationals, among the victims of the suicide bombs. Such acts of violence must be condemned. However, to the world's great dismay, the humanitarian tragedy caused by the Israeli army's brutal military attacks continues. We favour an investigation of the humanitarian situation in Palestine, particularly of what has actually occurred in the Jenin refugee camps. The United Nations Commission on Human Rights has already adopted a resolution on this issue and has created an inquiry commission. We call upon Israel and Palestine to assist the work of that group. We express our deep concern at the plight of the Palestinian civilians. We call upon the international community to increase its humanitarian assistance. We call upon Israel to provide assistance and to facilitate the work carried out by international humanitarian relief agencies.

The international community has reached agreement that third-party involvement is necessary to end the vicious cycle of violence. We appreciate and support the efforts made in this regard by the Secretary-General, Kofi Annan. Yesterday, he put forward a proposal for the deployment of a multinational force. China will thoroughly study that proposal. We hope that Israel, Palestine and the international community will respond positively and constructively to the Secretary-General's proposal and will establish without delay a third-party mechanism to create conditions favourable to the implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 1397 (2002).

Mr. Fall (Guinea) (*spoke in French*): Despite the strong resolutions recently adopted by the Council and the numerous efforts at mediation, the situation in the Middle East continues to deteriorate. The international community is a helpless witness to the dangerous escalation of violence in the region.

The Israeli army's powerful offensive in Palestinian cities has sown desolation among the besieged population, leaving in its wake destruction, arrests and violations of international humanitarian principles. The operation is characterized by the ongoing siege of President Arafat's headquarters, which has deprived him of his means to act.

As we have often said, the use of force is a source of frustration and will never resolve the problem of violence. Indeed, the more stubbornly the Israeli Defence Forces persist in their policy of occupation, the more intensely they fan the flames of hatred and violence. The logical consequence of such conduct is an increase in the number of suicide bomb attacks against innocent Israelis. These attacks, which are politically and morally unjustifiable, are in themselves detrimental to the search for a political solution to the conflict. Worse than escalation, the current situation is a tragedy that the international community must try to resolve by every means available to it.

During his briefing to the Council yesterday, Secretary-General Kofi Annan shared his comprehensive vision for confronting the dangerous situation developing in the Middle East and, above all, for finding a definitive solution to the conflict. He recommended, inter alia, that the international community consider taking new measures that are bolder than those attempted to date. In that connection, my delegation supports his proposal to deploy a multinational force within the framework of a proactive policy to protect human life, guarantee security in the region and preserve the opportunity to relaunch the political process.

My delegation feels that if this deployment, which the international community has called for so

often, had been accepted sooner, it might have prevented the cycle of violence committed by all sides that continues to unfold and thus the humanitarian tragedy that has occurred in the Jenin refugee camp. We are convinced that, if such a multinational force is to be deployed, important prerequisites must be met, in particular cooperation from both parties in establishing the best possible chances for an immediate ceasefire, thereby ensuring the success of the operation. In any case, the Security Council, acting in accordance with its Charter mandate, has all the powers necessary to implement this initiative.

As the Secretary-General said recently, efforts to calm the crisis and to achieve a ceasefire must be accompanied by action on the political front. In adopting resolutions 1397 (2002), 1402 (2002) and 1403 (2002), the Security Council has clearly defined the lineaments of the peace process for the Israelis and Palestinians, in particular, and for the Middle East in general. Our difficult task is therefore to persuade the parties to renounce the logic of war and their present policies, which are destructive and barren. The parties must demonstrate the political will to return to the negotiating table. That is the sole condition that can ensure security for Israel and the achievement of the legitimate political aspirations of the Palestinians.

In conclusion, my delegation hopes that the efforts undertaken by the various mediators will not be in vain and that the parties will heed the many appeals that have been made for talks to resume with a view to achieving a fair and definitive peace. The Israeli and Palestinian peoples, the main victims of the conflict, truly need that peace.

Mr. Tafrov (Bulgaria) (*spoke in French*): Bulgaria is deeply concerned about the very serious situation in the Middle East and appeals for an immediate ceasefire. Of greatest concern to us today is undoubtedly the humanitarian situation.

Yesterday, the Secretary-General spoke to us about the situation in Jenin. My country fully shares his concerns. It is urgent that humanitarian organizations be given access to Jenin so that human lives may be saved. We reaffirm the absolute necessity of Israel's withdrawing from the occupied territories and ending the isolation of President Yasser Arafat. In that perspective, we note the beginnings of a withdrawal, which we ascribe to a large extent to the ongoing commitment of the United States and the other members of the "quartet" to the mediation efforts, in particular the mission of United States Secretary of State Powell to the region.

The destruction of Palestinian infrastructure in no way contributes to solving existing problems because it does not allow moderate elements on the Palestinian side to control terrorist organizations. We expect the Palestinian Authority to commit itself fully to putting an end to acts of terrorism against Israel and to dismantling terrorist networks. Bulgaria appeals to all countries in the Middle East to work actively to prevent acts of terrorism, which seriously obstruct every effort of the international community to resolve the crisis.

As I have already had occasion to say, my country welcomes the statement issued in Madrid by the "quartet". A positive atmosphere has emerged in the international community, in which a unity of opinions prevails as to what should be done in the Middle East. One of the most positive elements is the ongoing commitment of the Government of the United States to a search for a solution to the crisis.

My country is ready to support any peace initiative that can contribute to the establishment of a just and lasting peace. We played an active part in the drafting of resolutions 1397 (2002), 1402 (2002) and 1403 (2002). We believe that Security Council resolutions provide an excellent basis for the efforts of the international community. From that perspective, we do not feel it to be the right time to vote on yet another resolution, because practically everything has already been said in the resolutions I have mentioned. We do not feel that a new resolution could add any positive elements to those already in place. We do not need any verbal inflation. What we really seek is the actual implementation of the existing resolutions.

On another occasion, my country will comment in detail on the very important proposals made by the Secretary-General in the Council yesterday concerning the dispatch of a force to the Middle East. I must say, however, that my country believes that deploying any force in the region should be an integral part of the international community's efforts and of a political process.

Mr. Belinga-Eboutu (Cameroon) (*spoke in French*): The delegation of Cameroon is grateful to you, Mr. President, for having accepted the request of the Arab Group urgently to convene a Security Council

meeting to discuss the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question.

That question, which is at the centre of the Israeli-Arab conflict, spanned the twentieth century, unfortunately without a solution being found. However, the Organization, through the Security Council, has envisaged a lasting settlement of that conflict. That is the purpose of resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and, recently, 1397 (2002). Those resolutions are the foundation for the political settlement; they are also the expression of the principle of land for peace.

Thus the objective to be attained is well known and the path for reaching it has been laid out. What we need today is political will — a political will that is strong and clear. It is because such political will has been lacking, and is still lacking, and because the parties have had scant interest in respecting the Council's resolutions, that the settlement of the Palestinian question has been slow to emerge.

The spiral of violence is expanding, and, in the face of that growth, there is great risk that discouragement will triumph. Over the past months and days, the escalation of violence has been particularly dangerous — so many deaths, so much suffering and destruction. It is truly a tragedy. In the light of those conditions, we understand the great hope raised by recent initiatives and decisions aimed at ending the violence and relaunching the peace process: resolution 1397 (2002), envisioning two States, Israeli and Palestinian, living side by side within secure and recognized borders; the peace initiative of Crown Prince Abdullah; the diplomatic actions in the field by the "quartet"; and the recent mission of the United States Secretary of State to the Middle East.

On 18 April the Secretary-General submitted to the Council and defended a new proposal for action by the international community to achieve peace in the Middle East, peace that — one cannot fail to repeat — must be based on settlement of the central question of Palestine. The Secretary-General proposed the deployment of a multinational force in the region. That force, which would not be a United Nations force, would be approved and authorized by the Council within the framework of Chapter VII of the Charter. As the Secretary-General informed the Council, it would pursue a quadruple objective: ending the cycle of Israeli-Palestinian violence, creating conditions for the resumption of normal activities in the Palestinian territories, re-establishing the institutions of the Palestinian Authority, and facilitating the resumption of negotiations on a political settlement of the entire Middle East crisis. Once it was made public, the proposal gave rise, not to opposition as such, but rather to a series of questions and reactions aimed at mastering its details. Over the course of negotiations in the coming days, we hope to see such questions and reactions smoothed out.

Cameroon believes that this multinational force can be deployed without waiting for the parties' full support. However, if it is to fulfil its mission, it must enjoy and be assured of the full cooperation of all parties. The evidence of such cooperation on the part of Israel and of the Palestinian Authority, as well as of other parties directly interested and concerned, would be a sign of their will to commit to the peace process, in which political and security considerations predominate.

Therefore, the Secretary-General's proposal, in our view, is an essential contribution in the search for a way to restore confidence between Israelis and Palestinians. Such confidence would assist in the resumption of negotiations towards peace. Only negotiations — no other type of action — can lead to peace. Any other kind of solution that the parties might wish to undertake, any other option that the parties might resort to can only lead to a nightmare or apocalypse — such an apocalypse as has been proclaimed so many times in that land holy to three faiths. But if there were such an apocalypse, it would not make any distinction between the winners and the losers, between these people and those people. We have caught a glimpse of this in the escalation of Israeli military violence and the multiplication of Palestinian suicide attacks.

It is for all these reasons that Cameroon shares the global vision of the Secretary-General. Confronted with the worsening situation, the lack of trust, the hatred that is developing, the language we hear from both parties — which is increasingly war-like and not peaceful — all of this means that the parties will not be able to find their way to the negotiating table by themselves. Hence, there is a need for action by a third party.

Not so long ago, when Cameroon proposed that a Security Council mission be sent to the field, we spoke about the need to apply electroshock therapy to the

situation. The multinational force, whose mandate has been sketched out, we feel is the solution towards which we should strive. This is a win-win situation. Israel would win, and the Palestine Authority and Palestine would win, too. The international community and the region would also win, and, above all, peace would win — peace in people's hearts, peace in their minds and, finally, protection for men, women and children.

The search for peace, we feel, should be the guiding line when we examine the Secretary-General's proposal. It is the search for peace that can bring us together to find rapidly the right shape and form for the multinational force.

This is an emergency. The situation is a tragedy. The credibility of the Security Council is at stake. Let's make a decision. Let's make a decision to help the Council emerge from what the other day I called the "deafening silence" of its resolutions.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to the representative of France.

Mr. Levitte (France) (*spoke in French*): France fully endorses the statement made by the Ambassador of Spain on behalf of the European Union. The continuation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is tragic. The humanitarian situation and the suffering of the people in the Palestinian territories are intolerable. Civilians are paying for the present murderous blockade with their lives, and this must urgently stop.

The international community, especially the Security Council that represents it, has even set a very clear framework to get us off this devastating treadmill. Specific demands have been placed on the parties by the Council in resolutions 1397 (2002), 1402 (2002) and 1403 (2002), and in the Presidential statement dated 10 April 2002. That statement endorsed the Madrid statement made by the "quartet", composed of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the United States Secretary of State, the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs and the High Representative of the European Union. France rejects any sequential or conditional reading of these decisions. They must be put into effect immediately and in their entirety.

Israel should immediately proceed to a complete withdrawal from reoccupied Palestinian towns and villages. Withdrawal of the Israeli army has been recorded in Jenin; now Israel must withdraw from other occupied towns and villages. In particular, Israel must lift the siege on the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem and give back full freedom of movement to the President of the Palestinian Authority, Yasser Arafat.

On their side, the Palestinian Authority and the President of the Authority must do everything to take on their share of responsibility and meet their commitments. In particular, they must put an end to acts of violence and terrorist attacks. Such blind attacks against civilians are morally and politically unacceptable. That is the reason why France welcomes the statement made last Saturday by the President of the Palestinian Authority and his staff condemning terrorism, especially the most recent attack in Jerusalem.

Over and beyond declarations, France would like to recall that the Palestinian Authority and the President of the Authority can act only insofar as they are given the means to do so. The destruction of Palestinian infrastructure by the Israeli army is a political fault that brings with it very grave consequences. Once a ceasefire has been signed, it will be necessary to start reconstruction of those facilities with the assistance of the international community. There is no other way than the conclusion of a ceasefire and the resumption, without delay, of political negotiations on a final and just political settlement.

We all know the general shape of such a settlement: an end to Israeli occupation and the peaceful coexistence of two independent States, Israel and Palestine, living within safe and recognized frontiers. It is a delusion to believe that such a settlement can be concluded without Yasser Arafat; he continues to be the legitimate and elected representative of the Palestinian people.

France is greatly concerned by the humanitarian situation of the Palestinian population, who lives under a constant curfew and lockdown. France is particularly concerned by the precarious plight of the people inside the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem and in the Jenin refugee camp.

Israel must take all the necessary measures under international humanitarian law defined by the Geneva Conventions of 1949, in particular with regard to the protection of civilians and foreign nationals, but also with regard to the treatment of detainees. Israel must

allow for the Palestinian population's immediate access to medical care and humanitarian assistance.

The gravity of the humanitarian crisis throughout the West Bank demands that the international community provide immediate assistance. The major humanitarian agencies have made urgent appeals. France has already sent more than 20 tons of emergency humanitarian assistance to the Palestinian territories through the International Committee of the Red Cross. Other emergency measures are being undertaken for the benefit of the Jenin refugee camp.

The scenes of devastation, in particular those in Jenin, as reported by the international press and the major humanitarian organizations, are extremely shocking. Every effort must be made to search for and rescue any survivors. The extreme seriousness of the eyewitness reports makes it absolutely necessary for us to find out the truth, in an objective manner. An international fact-finding committee must be sent to Jenin.

The time has also come to move the parties away from murderous confrontation. An international presence on the ground is indispensable; there is almost complete international consensus on that point. France fully supports the approach of the Secretary-General, who has made ambitious and courageous proposals for the deployment of a multinational interposition force. Such a force would work, together with the parties, to put an end to the spiral of violence and would monitor the ceasefire. It would establish a climate of security in the occupied Palestinian territories so as to ensure, in particular, that humanitarian assistance and economic aid could be delivered without impediment, in accordance with international humanitarian law. With the assistance of the international community, the force would contribute to the reconstruction of the institutions of the Palestinian Authority, including its security apparatus, which have been destroyed. It would create conditions of calm conducive to the relaunching of a genuine political negotiating process aimed at a final settlement of the conflict, without which there will never be a lasting ceasefire.

A collective and in-depth process of reflection must now take place so that a well-considered and effective decision can be speedily arrived at. The international community should make clear its readiness to deploy an international presence and should immediately begin discussions on the practical ways and means of doing so. It would, of course, be appropriate to consult the parties; their cooperation will be required. The composition of any international force should be such that its impartiality would be assured for both parties. A significant American commitment appears to us to be indispensable.

The situation is tragic. We must not, however, lose hope. The efforts of the international community are continuing on an intensive basis. The United States sent its Secretary of State to the region, where he was able to meet at length with the leaders of the two parties. That new American commitment marks a positive turning point, however great the difficulties encountered may be. France hopes that the Secretary of State will continue his mission, which should benefit from the continuing support of the Security Council and of the international community as a whole. The Secretary of State has the full support of the other members of the "quartet" who, for their part, are also playing an active role. We must persevere along the path set out by Security Council resolutions. Only by redoubling our efforts and through political will and tenacity will the international community be able to get the parties to see reason and, finally, to establish peace.

Mr. Koonjul (Mauritius): I would like to start by expressing our deepest condolences to our good friend Ambassador Yehuda Lancry, the Permanent Representative of Israel, for the untimely demise of his niece, who lost her life in a terrorist attack last week. Such untimely deaths bring home once again how important it is to stop the cycle of violence, which seems to have become the order of the day in the region. Neither side in this conflict will be able to advance its cause through violence and military assault; such acts can bring only destruction, loss and suffering to both sides.

At the end of the Security Council debate on the situation in the Middle East that took place on 9 April, the Permanent Representative of Israel expressed dismay at the statement made by Mauritius during the debate, claiming that it was one-sided. It is obvious that my good friend had not taken into account the specific context in which the statement was made. Our colleague is certainly aware of our unequivocal condemnation of terrorism in all its forms, as well as of suicide bombings; we have expressed that position in many statements, both here and elsewhere.

The statement we made on 9 April came at a time when the entire international community was calling upon Israel to stop its military assaults in the occupied Palestinian territories; when Israel was turning a blind eye and a deaf ear to the pressing calls made by the Security Council and the international community as a whole for withdrawal from the Palestinian cities; and when violations of international humanitarian law by Israel were taking place in defiance of the calls of the international community.

On 10 April, the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), Mr. Hansen, said that "the situation in the Jenin refugee camp is fast turning into a catastrophe". UNRWA press reports indicated that Israeli tanks and bulldozers were intensifying their demolition of shelters in the Jenin camp and that bulldozers were "shaving off" shelters. Humanitarian workers were being denied access to the refugee camps and were prevented from providing basic necessities — food, water and medicine — to those in need. Ambulances were being shot at and doctors killed. In other words, Israel continued to flout Council resolutions 1402 (2002) and 1403 (2002).

Let me also recall that the heads of the major international humanitarian agencies have expressed their deep dismay and outrage at the military actions in the occupied Palestinian territories and the consequences of such actions in exacerbating the humanitarian crisis. They also noted increasing and worrying incidences of flagrant disrespect for international law and the security of humanitarian personnel. Even the Secretary-General, in his address to the Commission on Human Rights in Geneva, stated that in the Middle East international norms of human rights and humanitarian law were being violated on a massive scale. He also added that targeting civilians and the disproportionate use of force beyond legitimate military objectives are a violation of international humanitarian law and must be rejected.

In Madrid the Secretary-General stated that

> "respect for international humanitarian law and the humanitarian organizations is the most basic requirement for any nation that lays claim to democracy and membership of the international community."

Given the human tragedy that was unfolding in the Palestinian refugee camps, especially in Jenin, where women and children were falling victim to indiscriminate attacks by the Israeli Defence Forces, the position of Mauritius can certainly be well understood.

Mauritius is a law-abiding country which believes strongly in the sanctity of international institutions and has the greatest respect for international law and for the decisions of the Security Council. This is the principled position that guides us and will continue to guide our decisions and our statements for the rest of our tenure in the Security Council.

Today, with Israel only partially easing restrictions on access to the Jenin refugee camp, we are already hearing reports of the horrific scale of the devastation perpetrated by Israel in that area. The Special Coordinator of the United Nations for the Middle East, Mr. Terje Roed-Larsen, stated yesterday that the scene in Jenin was "horrifying beyond belief, as if there had been an earthquake there". This, sadly, reminds us of the devastation of 11 September, which occurred closer to us. It is still unclear how many innocent Palestinians were killed in Jenin. It would be worth finding out from the Israeli authorities how many innocent Palestinian civilians had to be sacrificed in the process of targeting the suspected terrorist elements in Jenin.

Mauritius believes that there should be a full-scale international investigation of the events that took place there. Furthermore, Israel should cooperate with the fact-finding mission that Ms. Mary Robinson, the High Commissioner for Human Rights, intends to lead to the occupied Palestinian territories.

While we await the investigation, the humanitarian situation in Jenin should be addressed immediately. Israel should immediately lift the curfew on Jenin, and it should cooperate fully with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), which are trying to rescue the civilians who remain trapped in the rubble and to alleviate the sufferings of those left in the area.

While we understand Israel's preoccupation with eliminating terrorist elements, it has clearly made no distinction between those who are engaged in terror and innocent Palestinian civilians. The deliberate and systematic humiliation of the Palestinian people and their leader will result only in the creation of many more militants and extremists, as was stated by the

representative of Ireland during our most recent debate. Besieging Chairman Arafat, as has been done for four months now, can only add to the growing anger of the Palestinians and to that of the Arab world. It is unwise and a clear miscalculation to sideline him, as he remains, as even foreign Minister Peres has admitted, the only avenue for any peace negotiation with Palestine.

We call upon Israel once again immediately to withdraw from all the Palestinian cities and immediately to implement Security Council resolutions 1402 (2002) and 1403 (2002).

We condemn the siege on the Church of the Nativity just as much as we condemn the use of the Church as a sanctuary by militants.

Secretary of State Powell, to whom the Council gave its full support through its resolution 1403 (2002), is now back from his mission in the Middle East. While he may have made some progress towards a path to peace, it is clear that the main objective of resolutions 1402 (2002) and 1403 (2002) concerning a ceasefire and the withdrawal of Israel from the Palestinian cities has not been achieved, nor has the siege on Chairman Arafat ended, despite the statement he made last week denouncing all acts of terrorism. We welcome that statement, and we urge the Palestinians fully to abide by it.

It is time for us carefully to examine what needs to be done to ensure a complete Israeli withdrawal, as called for in Security Council resolutions 1402 (2002) and 1403 (2002). We need to reflect on what further action should be taken by the Security Council to pull the two parties out of the cycle of self-destruction and to bring them to the negotiating table, thereby leading to a political settlement based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and the vision envisaged in resolution 1397 (2002).

In this context, the proposal outlined by the Secretary-General before the Council yesterday to put together a robust and credible multinational force to assist the parties in ending the violence appears to be not only timely but the only solution to this crisis. We share the view of the Secretary-General that left alone, the parties will not be able to extricate themselves from the current impasse.

We therefore call on all the members of the Council, as well as on the international community, to give careful consideration to this proposal, in order to avert any further aggravation of the situation, which could lead to full-scale disaster in the region.

The Middle East peace process is going through a very difficult time, and the credibility of the Security Council is being affected. It is very important that we all work together in the interest of international peace and security.

Mr. Valdivieso (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): The international community had great expectations for the meeting of the "quartet" in Madrid and Secretary of State Powell's mission to the region. Perhaps those expectations were too great. The quartet and Secretary of State Powell have probably had a positive effect on the situation, and the concrete results will come into view only later on.

But the reality is that all these initiatives leave us with an additional sense of frustration, as the parties still have not complied with the resolutions of the Security Council, in particular 1402 (2002) and 1403 (2002). That is why we find ourselves once again meeting in this Chamber.

I should like to touch on two separate but related topics: the humanitarian situation and the proposal for a multinational force.

Concerning the humanitarian situation, we have begun to receive initial reports from Jenin. The camp is described as appearing to have been struck by an earthquake — such is the degree of devastation and destruction. What emerges clearly from such early reports is that what happened in Jenin goes beyond any military logic. Reports of buildings being demolished with women and children still inside them are appalling, to say the least. Other testimony about summary executions and the use of civilians as human shields are very serious allegations of international humanitarian law.

What is most important now is for us to help the people who are still in the camp, to attend properly to the wounded, to rescue those still trapped in the rubble and to retrieve the bodies of the dead. We would like to join all of those who have called on the Israeli authorities immediately to allow rescue teams free access to Jenin.

But above and beyond emergency humanitarian action, there must be a clarification of what actually

happened in Jenin, and we deem it indispensable that a mechanism of inquiry be set up.

Jenin is perhaps the most tragic case with respect to the humanitarian situation, but it is certainly not the only one. We have been told, for instance, that the strict military controls for access to the Gaza Strip are causing a food shortage.

The mission of the Commission on Human Rights, led by the High Commissioner for Human Rights, has been postponed because the Israeli authorities have not given their permission.

I wish to point out that nothing that I have said means in any way that the suicide attacks carried out by extremist Palestinians against the Israeli civilian population can be excused. On other occasions, in this Chamber and in informal consultations of the Council, we have denounced this practice, emphasizing also its total ineffectiveness in the search for the political results to which the Palestinian population aspires. In this context, the use of holy sites as areas of confrontation is unacceptable. That is what is happening at the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem.

Yesterday the Secretary-General made a proposal to the members of the Security Council on the establishment of a multinational force. We welcomed the Secretary-General's initiative in consultations and do so now at this open meeting. It is undoubtedly an important proposal that must be very seriously considered. It is clear that the parties are submerged in war logic, as was pointed out in the Secretary-General's briefing. Therefore, intervention by a third party is needed. We had already expressed our belief that neither the actions of the Israeli Defense Forces nor the suicide attacks of extremist Palestinians will achieve the security hoped for by some nor the political aspirations of the other side.

The only possible path has been and continues to be political negotiations. The establishment of a multinational force would contribute to the creation of a climate favourable to political negotiations. The parties must recognize that this would benefit both sides. Therefore, they should welcome the Secretary-General's proposal. We hope to be able to discuss his initiative as soon as possible, once it has been evaluated in the various capitals.

Colombia believes that we must continue building an appropriate role for the Council to play in this age-old Middle Eastern conflict, a role that will be fulfilled by preserving unity among its members, as well as the type of cohesion demonstrated in this latest phase, at least since 12 March, when resolution 1397 (2002) was adopted. It would be inconsistent and inappropriate if the Council were to contradict the spirit and the content of resolutions 1397 (2002), 1402 (2002) and 1403 (2002).

Mr. Ryan (Ireland): Ireland is fully associated with the statement made yesterday by the representative of Spain on behalf of the European Union.

Since the Council adopted resolutions 1397 (2002), 1402 (2002) and 1403 (2002), the situation in the Middle East has grown ever more critical and perilous. Resolution 1397 (2002) affirmed a vision of what could be achieved by the parties trusting themselves to take essential steps of faith and courage towards the goal of two States, Palestine and Israel, living side by side in peace, within secure and recognized borders.

Instead of seeing progress towards this goal, the international community in recent weeks has watched events spiral out of control. Security Council resolutions 1402 (2002) and 1403 (2002) have not been implemented, including by the failure of Israel to withdraw from the Palestinian-controlled territories as demanded by the Council.

Our debate today, therefore, takes place at a time of sadness and anger, felt across the world, at what has been happening in the region. Violence and blood-spilling on a daily basis have affronted the conscience of the world. No other words will do. The demands of the Security Council have not been heeded. Rules of honour, legal and moral, on how people should treat each other have been broken with what seems like careless indifference and disregard. The situation has been and remains an unacceptable affront to the values that we in the United Nations, and the wider international community, cherish.

Ireland greatly appreciates the role of the "quartet" in recent weeks in seeking to turn the tide of violence. I want to pay special tribute to Secretary Powell for his unflagging work in the region over the past period. It must be clear to all of us that it is now more important than ever that a strong, vigorous level of engagement by the international community be sustained and intensified over the coming period in

order to advance a political dynamic and achieve an end to violence. Left to themselves, the parties will remain paralysed and frozen.

Ireland fully accepts that the Government of Israel has a right and a duty to protect its citizens from terrorist attacks. We totally condemn the practice of suicide bombings, which have killed many innocent Israeli civilians. These attacks on innocent civilians must stop for good.

We know from our own experience in Ireland the fear that is generated by acts of terror and the disruption that these acts cause to normal life. We also know from our own experience that it is not enough to fight terrorism by military means alone. Such a struggle would be interminable. The root causes of conflict must also be addressed, and this battle can only be fought by political means.

It has also been the case — and it remains the case — that any actions by Israel must be proportionate, and must also be in accordance with international humanitarian law. The actions that have been taken over the past two weeks in the West Bank have been far from proportionate. The reports we have received, and the accounts we have had from the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Welfare Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and from universally respected non-governmental organizations, as well as the briefing we received yesterday from Secretary-General Annan, make it clear that Israel has the most serious questions to answer about the conduct of its operations.

A security force is not entitled to bombard houses inhabited by civilians, or systematically to bulldoze their houses and leave them without shelter. One can never justify refusing for several days to allow access for humanitarian assistance to the civilian population, or to leave a population without food, water and shelter. Nor can there be any justification for refusing to conduct, or permit to be arranged, an emergency operation to rescue people trapped in rubble until it was too late. We cannot regard all this as other then a serious breach of international humanitarian law.

Israel must now cooperate fully with UNRWA and other agencies in allowing humanitarian relief to reach people who are without food, water, shelter and medical services. Water and electricity supplies must be restored. The curfew in Jenin must be lifted.

Israel must also cooperate fully with the United Nations Secretary-General, the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the International Committee of the Red Cross and non-governmental organizations to help them establish what has happened in Jenin and elsewhere and to give the world a full and accurate picture of events. Ireland fully supports the call for an independent investigation. Furthermore, we specifically request the Israeli Government to allow the High Commissioner, Mrs. Mary Robinson, to enter Israel and the Palestinian areas to fulfil the mandate given to her by the United Nations body charged with the protection of human rights, and to do so now.

As the Secretary-General has several times told the Council, there is no military solution to this conflict. Far from advancing peace and security, the use of force embitters people and corrodes trust, and puts off the day of peace. Ireland calls on the Palestinian Authority to do all in its power to prevent acts of violence against civilians. We call on both sides to implement fully resolutions 1402 (2002) and 1403 (2002). In particular, we call on Israel to do fully and totally, now, what it should have done, at once, following resolutions 1402 (2002) and 1403 (2002): withdraw from all the Palestinian-controlled areas, including Ramallah, Bethlehem and Gaza. The restrictions on the movement of Chairman Arafat must be ended.

My authorities are seriously concerned at the declared intention of the Israeli authorities to establish a tight cordon around the Palestinian-controlled areas after they have evacuated, permitting movement neither in nor out. What are its intentions for the population of these areas? Are they to be kept in permanent captivity? What economic activity will sustain them? Who will provide their security, now that the Palestinian security structures have been systematically destroyed? What civil structures can be envisaged in such conditions?

Ireland shares the Secretary-General's deep concern at the danger to regional security presented by the attacks launched across the Blue Line. The Council has determined that resolution 425 (1978) has been implemented in respect of Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon. The relevant Council resolutions require that all concerned do all in their power to ensure respect for the Blue Line in its entirety.

Mutual trust has completely broken down between the parties. We in the Council, and the international community in general, must redouble our efforts to help both sides move out of this dire impasse. We therefore welcome the proposal by the Secretary-General for an international force to provide the security environment, and the space, for a return to political negotiations. My authorities regard this as a serious and important contribution to the efforts to resolve this issue. We urge the parties to give it the most careful consideration, and also urge others in the international community to persuade them of the help that it could offer towards helping them to emerge from the present deadlock.

We have also listened very carefully to what has been said regarding an international conference. We agree that a well-prepared and inclusive conference, called for the purpose of setting in motion negotiations aimed at achieving the vision, enshrined in Secretary Powell's Louisville speech and in the initiative of Crown Prince Abdullah of Saudi Arabia, and endorsed at the recent summit of the League of Arab States and in our own resolution 1397 (2002), is worth the most careful consideration by the parties and by the international community. It must be for each participant to nominate its own representative to the conference.

The Israeli and Palestinian people must live together side by side. Every Israeli, and every Palestinian, has to recognize this. The Palestinian people are entitled to their national aspirations, and it is the denial of these aspirations for so long that is the primary cause of the present crisis. Israel is entitled to secure and recognized borders. The political, security and economic and humanitarian tracks must now be engaged with all speed and determination, so that a political settlement can be reached based on resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 1397 (2002).

Sir Jeremy Greenstock (United Kingdom): The United Kingdom fully subscribes to the European Union position presented by Spain yesterday.

In the last Security Council debate on Palestine, I called the continuation of Israeli actions in the West Bank intolerable. The development of the situation since then has indeed become I think for almost all of us more than we can bear. The image of the region's only truly democratic State lowering its standards to the point — if first reports are in due course confirmed — of callous disregard for civilian life and humanitarian circumstances is a truly disturbing one. All the evidence points to excessive and disproportionate use of force by the Israeli Defense Forces in Jenin and elsewhere. This is not only unacceptable in terms of what Israel is professing to achieve in the longer term; it is also futile and unproductive.

The British Government believes that the circumstances of the fighting in and around Jenin, and perhaps elsewhere in the West Bank, need to be carefully examined against the obligations on all States to observe international law and international humanitarian law in the conduct of military operations. The United Kingdom would wish to see an independent inquiry set up soon to establish the facts of what has happened.

Also, in the short term, we regard the humanitarian requirements as paramount. Unrestricted and unconditional access for relief agencies and medical workers must be allowed at once. Here, too, the proper action has been too slow. We have made this clear to the Israeli Government, and in turn they must make it clear to their forces on the ground.

Meanwhile, we are all too well aware that the resolutions of the Council have not been implemented. The United Kingdom continues to insist on the immediate withdrawal of Israeli forces from Palestinian territory. Arrangements must quickly be put in hand for a ceasefire and for steps to be taken for an early return to political negotiations.

We applaud the efforts of Secretary of State Powell, together with other members of the "quartet" on the ground, to set in place the necessary steps. We look forward to his and their continuing engagement. As the British Prime Minister has made very clear in his public statements, there is no alternative to intensive third-party action to ensure that the parties return to a sensible course of a cessation of violence and a return to political negotiations. We accept that this will have to be done in a series of measured steps. There will be no overnight success.

The Secretary-General, who clearly shares that view, has made a further, carefully considered proposal for the introduction of an international force to help damp down the violence and restore the prospects for political discussion. The United Kingdom will study his proposals in detail.

We all recognize that such a proposal, as the Secretary-General himself has made clear, would need the support of both parties if it was to be realizable. At the very least, there will need to be significant international assistance to the Palestinian Authority to restore its capacity to administrate the occupied territories and to regenerate some kind of a normal life to the Palestinian people. Assistance in the security aspects of that will have to be carefully considered. The United Kingdom is prepared to stretch to the limit the boundaries of practicality, but if proposals are to be successfully implemented, realities will have to be respected.

Automatic recourse to continued violence is entrenching itself deeply in the psychology of both sides. A proper ceasefire is an essential prerequisite to restoring the situation to a point where hope can be regenerated. This has to include the complete cessation of acts of terrorism by Palestinians against innocent Israeli civilians. And on this, the Palestinian leadership has not been convincing. Leaders on both sides carry the responsibility ahead of anyone else of making sure that the route to peace is now rebuilt.

We must not loose sight of the basics behind all this. The Palestinians are entitled to a homeland, their own State. Israel is entitled to absolute security. The two go together.

Mr. Aguilar Zinser (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): The picture in the Middle East is grave and the prognosis of how it might evolve is critical and pessimistic. Nothing of what has been attempted so far to alleviate the situation. The resolutions of the Security Council, diplomatic initiatives by the "quartet" and Secretary Powell's trip have either been ignored or have not produced the outcomes that everyone hoped for. International diplomacy in the Middle East seems to be at an impasse. None of the initiatives to alleviate the situation has worked. The Palestinians and Israelis are trapped in an inescapable spiral of resentment, reprisal and hatred. The events in the Palestinian territories, particularly in Jenin, deepen the wounds of history and prevent them from healing; they cast a pall over the future. The persistence of suicidal terrorist acts exacerbates the suffering and anguish of the Israeli people and drives the parties even further from a solution based on reconciliation and hope.

Given this situation, my delegation wishes first to express its most profound concern at the grave humanitarian situation in the occupied Palestinian territories, particularly in the Jenin refugee camp, where, according to preliminary reports, there has been large-scale destruction with devastating effects on the civilian population.

The Secretary-General's statement before the Security Council yesterday seems to confirm the international community's fear that deplorable acts have been committed in Jenin. Thus, a necessary first step is for the international community to move urgently to protect the civilian population and to provide humanitarian assistance so that the minimum conditions for sustenance can be ensured. In this context, my country once again calls on Israel to comply fully with international humanitarian law and to provide unhindered access to relief and assistance organizations.

We know that this is not enough. That is why Mexico strongly supports the request of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mary Robinson, to be allowed to carry out her functions on the ground so that a report can be prepared on the human rights situation in the occupied territories. We also believe that resolute action must be taken by the Secretary-General, such as his attempts to provide humanitarian assistance to the region. We also consider the role of the International Committee of the Red Cross and of the non-governmental humanitarian community to be fundamental in dealing with the problem.

Given the gravity of events in Jenin, as preliminary reports suggest, the international community requests the creation of a commission of inquiry to shed light on the facts and to assess their true scope. Mexico supports that request and believes that it is the Secretary-General's duty to define the shape such an inquiry would take.

Mexico deplores once again that the international community's appeals to break the cycle of violence have gone ignored. That cannot be tolerated. Security Council resolutions must be complied with fully and unconditionally. In this respect, we have already pointed out that the United Nations Charter clearly sets out the measures to ensure compliance with the Organization's decisions and the actions necessary to maintain international peace and security in critical situations, such as that of the Middle East today.

My country reaffirms that the Council must not lose sight of its own powers and mandate. The premises according to which we must act are obvious and of indisputable validity. We cannot base our actions in the Middle East on assumptions that reality and the behaviour of the parties to the conflict have so often proven wrong. We must therefore first recognize in the clearest manner that the recent actions of the Israeli armed forces in Palestine demonstrate that the use of force is not the solution. The proof is irrefutable. There is no military solution to the conflict. The violence of both sides lacks any political, legal, military or moral justification. The parties do not acknowledge this; they remain committed to violence.

Confronted with this situation, the international community must be unequivocal. The friends of the Palestinian people, especially in the Arab world, and the friends of Israel must not even insinuate that there is any valid justification, reason or understandable basis for the acts of violence committed by either side. That must be the unquestionable starting point for the international community's response to the conflict.

Furthermore, a solution will not come from the initiatives or the resolve of the parties, nor can they impose their will by force. However, the international community, the Council, the United Nations as a whole and the "quartet" must craft formulas for a viable solution based on international law and the Charter of the United Nations, drawing on the diplomatic and political skills of all, especially of those with the greatest influence over the parties. A qualitative leap must be made; we must move beyond diplomatic efforts and the promotion of understanding in the region to positive action so that Israel and Palestine can escape the trap of violence into which they have fallen. That will enable us to tackle the roots, structure and multiple dimensions of the conflict.

My country believes that, in addition to the preceding elements, we should call for a third party with a direct presence in the area of conflict and with full legitimacy and determination to enforce international law and the civilized will of the international community.

The lack of a solution coming from the parties themselves has led to a situation of paralysis which, for the sake of international peace and security, must not be tolerated. We must be clear: the paralysis of the parties must not spread to the international community. On the contrary, the international community must adopt a proactive stance capable of offering alternatives leading to a peaceful solution to the conflict. Thus, Mexico, conscious of the difficulties and the risks involved, has nevertheless decided to welcome with complete enthusiasm the Secretary-General's proposal to the Security Council on the creation of a multinational force under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter.

We are pleased that this proposal has been submitted for the consideration of the international community so that it may be examined and defined prior to its due and prudent implementation. The proposal offers a new range of action towards which we must mobilize our forces. In the face of the deadlocked situation and the endless suffering of the civilian population, we can no longer postpone international action. History shows that the parties are extremely unlikely to break the cycle of violence, much less re-establish the minimum level of trust necessary to relaunching the negotiations.

Only through the intervention of such a multilateral force on the ground can we ensure compliance with the decisions taken by the community of States, in particular Security Council resolutions 1397 (2002), 1402 (2002) and 1403 (2002), and thus move towards a definitive solution to the conflict: the establishment of a Palestinian State within secure borders with Israel.

We agree with the Secretary-General that this mechanism for mediation should establish a secure environment for the parties and the conditions necessary to the resumption of political negotiations towards a definitive settlement that will make reality the vision described in resolution 1397 (2002) of two States, Israel and Palestine, living in peace within secure and internationally recognized borders.

Mr. Mahbubani (Singapore): We listened carefully to the debate yesterday and this morning, which was convened soon after United States Secretary of State Colin Powell returned from his important mission to the Middle East. Here, we are pleased to note that the Council decided to wait for his return before resuming its discussion on the Middle East.

One of the key tasks of Secretary Powell's visit was to work towards the implementation of Security Council 1402 (2002). The international community, including this Council, had given its full backing to

Secretary Powell's mission. This meeting is therefore an opportune moment to consider how far we have progressed towards ensuring observance of the decisions we have adopted, including resolutions 1402 (2002) and 1403 (2002), as well as our presidential statement of 10 April 2002. We should also, of course, consider how best the Council can work further to ensure full compliance with its resolutions.

Singapore finds it highly regrettable that the clear demands made by the Security Council for an immediate cessation of violence and the withdrawal of Israeli troops from Palestinian cities have not been fulfilled. Instead, we find a grim humanitarian crisis in the occupied territories, which must be reversed straight away. In particular, we have heard alarming reports about the horrific devastation, both human and material, in the Jenin refugee camp. Immediate efforts to address the humanitarian situation must be undertaken. We note that several speakers have highlighted the importance of addressing the situation in Jenin. This is one clear theme that has emerged from the debate and we hope that concrete results will also emerge from this debate on the situation in Jenin.

In this regard, we also fully support the three immediate requirements set out by the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Mr. Terje Roed-Larsen, namely, the lifting of the curfew and allowing freedom of movement for civilian and humanitarian workers alike; expanded assistance from the Israel Defence Forces to humanitarian workers, in terms of both the provision of equipment and security liaison; and the facilitation of the delivery of large-scale water and food supplies to the population in need.

There have been claims and counter-claims on the nature and extent of the humanitarian crisis. We believe that the only way objectively to assess the situation and to dispel any unfounded rumours is for an independent and impartial body to establish the facts. Again, we note that several speakers have called for such an independent inquiry.

Like many who have spoken before us, we are gratified that Secretary Powell's visit has produced some results. One of the key achievements is a strong convergence of views, including in the joint statement by the "quartet" and supported by the Security Council, that a coherent and comprehensive long-term strategy is needed to help the parties break the cycle of violence. This includes ending the violence and starting the withdrawal of Israeli forces from occupied territories under Palestinian control, accompanied at the same time by genuine efforts by the Palestinian Authority to take steps against suicide bombers and other acts of terror.

An equally important component of this comprehensive approach is to provide the political horizon and the hopes for peace. Long-term progress depends on the political will of both sides to move beyond short-term security measures to the broad vision set out in resolution 1397 (2002), in which two States, Israel and Palestine, live side by side within secure and recognized borders. The Arab peace initiative adopted at the Beirut summit is a historic opportunity that should not be squandered. We look forward to further initiatives to bring the process forward.

The international community must also address the long-term economic situation. We hope that the donor community will respond generously to help rebuild the destroyed Palestinian infrastructure and economy.

As we have learned in so many other conflict situations, progress on the security, political, humanitarian and reconstruction tracks, within the framework of a comprehensive strategy, are mutually reinforcing. Yesterday, the Secretary-General also provided convincing reasons why the deployment of an impartial, robust and credible multinational force could create a secure environment and political space that will allow the comprehensive strategic framework to take root. The Secretary-General's proposal for an international presence merits serious consideration.

Clearly, the Secretary-General has fulfilled his Charter obligation under Article 99 to bring to the Council's attention

> "any matter which in his opinion may threaten the maintenance of international peace and security".

It is now up to the Security Council to decide whether it can live up to its own Charter responsibility under Article 24 as the principal organ of the United Nations conferred with the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. Indeed, as we all know, this is a question that has been widely asked around this debate: Can the Security

Council seriously meet the responsibilities that it has on the Middle East issue?

In conclusion, we would like to stress that clear pronouncements made by the Security Council are being ignored and that basic principles of international law, including international humanitarian law, are being flouted. This will, in the long run, only damage the credibility of the Security Council and the security of all States. If the Security Council does not take immediate steps to ensure full compliance with resolutions 1402 (2002) and 1403 (2002), we risk eroding the Council's authority to ensure the full implementation of its other resolutions. I believe that the Permanent Representative of Mexico, speaking earlier, also made the point about the credibility of the Council.

We should therefore find effective ways of collaborating closely with all relevant partners to ensure compliance with Security Council decisions. We also believe that only by harmonizing our efforts and acting in unity can we best achieve our objectives.

Mr. Wehbe (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): The entire world has witnessed the killing and destruction in the Jenin refugee camp, Nablus, Ramallah and other Palestinian cities and villages where the media have yet to arrive. A tragedy has been visited upon the Palestinian people.

In this regard, I should like to express our appreciation once again to you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting in response to the request by the Group of Arab States.

My delegation associates itself with the statement by the Permanent Representative of sisterly Tunisia on behalf of the Group of Arab States. We had hoped to share the optimism of many State representatives who addressed the Council last week with regard to persuading Israel to cease the barbaric and destructive policies that it is pursuing and to withdraw immediately from Palestinian cities and villages recently reoccupied. We believe that it is now clear to everyone — even the most optimistic among us — that the Israeli war Government is not only far removed from peace and the logic of peace, but is also waging a war against the principles and values of peace. Israel's only intentions and methods seem to be to kill peace, to perpetuate Israel's occupation of Arab lands and to frustrate the aspirations of the Palestinian people to end Israel's occupation, oppression, spite and racial hatred and its war against the establishment of an independent Palestinian State on Palestinian land. Such Israeli acts can have no other meaning.

In its insistence on implementing those policies, the Israeli Government did not even heed the advice of its closest allies — those who have always promised it their full support. Thus, Israel rejected all calls to withdraw immediately from Palestinian cities and to end its attacks on Palestinian civilians. Instead, in defiance of those allies and the Security Council, Israel persisted in its attacks on the defenceless Palestinian people. It carried out new massacres, then proceeded to destroy what it had been unable to destroy at the beginning of its campaign of aggression.

As for Israel's total disregard of the Council's resolutions, it requires no proof or evidence. Since the adoption of resolution 1402 (2002), which was reaffirmed by the adoption of resolution 1403 (2002), Israel has not explicitly rejected either of those resolutions. Instead, it has acted consistently against their substance, in addition to issuing a torrent of statements directly attacking the Council's credibility. What is worse, it has attempted to mislead the international community by pointing the finger of blame at the Palestinians and the Arab States in order to divert attention from the realities on the ground. On a number of occasions, our delegation and other Arab delegations have warned that we must be very careful with regard to the Israeli Government's position, as it has attempted to ride the wave of anti-terrorist sentiment and has used the tactic of buying time to carry out more war crimes, genocide and ethnic cleansing under flimsy and mendacious pretexts.

It is very sad that the Council — indeed, the entire United Nations system — has been unable thus far to end the massacre being carried out by Israel under the international community's nose. Such impotence was explicitly shown by the failure of the United Nations to respond even to the cries of its own officials in the Palestinian territories. Those officials found the Organization's deafening silence very strange in the light of the damage caused to institutions it had built through the efforts of the international community since 1948. Israel was allowed to demolish what the United Nations had built over a period of more than 50 years with the help of the donor community: institutions, schools, clinics — the infrastructure built to reduce the suffering of those whom Israel had forcibly expelled in 1948.

It is not surprising that those refugees should bear the brunt of Israel's war machine today. Israel does not want them to remain alive — rather, it wants to bury them, and with them the cause of a people forced to seek refuge in a diaspora, exiled from their land and their homes. We all heard the statement by Mr. Peter Hansen, Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), describing Israel's gross violations of the Geneva conventions. He stated that Israeli forces had intentionally destroyed medical equipment owned by the United Nations. He explained how ambulances owned by UNRWA had been targeted, adding that Israel had destroyed medical supplies and equipment in some medical centres and had used UNRWA's schools as interrogation centres. Mr. Hansen continued that Israeli soldiers, before waging war on the camps, placed ammunition in UNRWA vehicles on two occasions and were caught by UNRWA personnel. At this very moment, while we are meeting, Israel is escalating its barbaric practices against the Palestinian people. They are carrying out massacres that are a breech of all international laws, instruments and norms. They are laying unjust siege to Palestinian cities and villages, and even when pretending to withdraw from some cities they remain at the gates and encircle the cities. All these are war crimes and crimes against humanity, including crimes of genocide and ethnic cleansing. Israeli occupation forces have been preventing international humanitarian organizations, including the International Committee of the Red Cross and UNRWA, from performing the humanitarian role of providing supplies and medical assistance to the wounded and from trying to rescue and save civilians from under the rubble of their homes. These acts must all be firmly and strongly dealt with by the international community. They must be directly condemned by all States. We must intervene immediately to put an end to the Israeli policy of killing and destroying.

Israel's disregard for Security Council resolutions must in no way lead to a paralysis of the Council's actions in response to Israel's aggression and anti-peace policies. Once again, what is required is for the Council to respond to international will, to shoulder its fundamental responsibility to maintain international peace and security. We reaffirm that the massacre perpetrated by the Israeli Government in the Jenin refugee camp and in other Palestinian cities must not be condoned in any way whatsoever.

The draft resolution presented by the Arab Group contains a paragraph requesting the Secretary-General to dispatch a committee to the Jenin refugee camp to investigate the Israel's massacre of innocent Palestinian civilians and to witness first hand the destruction visited upon that camp.

The draft resolution presented by the Arab Group is yet another attempt that ought to be supported by all members of the Security Council. We hope it will be, because it responds to the wishes of the international community and reflects our desire to safeguard the prestige, unity and role of the Security Council and consistency in its actions.

The last Arab Summit meeting in Beirut drew a map for a comprehensive, just peace and for an end to the Arab-Israeli conflict in the region. The Arab Summit proposal proceeds from the implementation of relevant Security Council resolutions and the principle of land for peace. The implementation of these resolutions would insure full Israeli withdrawal from occupied Arab lands and would end the occupation that is the fundamental, genuine source of all the problems and instability that prevail in the region.

The establishment of the independent Palestinian State on Palestinian soil with East Jerusalem as its capital, the rightful return of Palestinian refugees, a right affirmed by the resolutions of the international community — those are the elements of a peaceful settlement that will lead to peace and security in the region. Continued occupation and the continual killing of Palestinians will not lead to peace.

Yesterday we heard the statement of the Secretary-General in which he spoke of the tragic situation of the Palestinian people. We have also been following the statements of his personal representatives, Terje Roed Larsen, the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, and Peter Hansen, the Commissioner-General of UNRWA. We heard from them an accurate description of Israel's crimes in Jenin and in other Palestinian cities and villages. While we highly appreciate the calls for an end to this tragedy from the Secretary-General and his representatives, we call on the international community to help in preventing a catastrophe on Palestinian land and against its people.

Let me point specifically to the proposal made by the Secretary-General pertaining to the dispatch of a multinational force to the occupied Palestinian

territories. It is my pleasure to express the strong welcome and support of the Syrian Arab Republic for the Secretary-General's proposal to dispatch such a force.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I give the floor to the representative of Norway.

Mr. Kolby (Norway): The situation in the Middle East is at a crossroad. The responsibility for ending violence and pursuing peace rests primarily with the parties. But the international community cannot remain aloof.

Norway regrets that Secretary Powell's mission to the Middle East did not achieve all its goals. However, we welcome the continued commitment of the United States to finding a way to peace.

Israel has the right to protect its citizens. The terrorist attacks against Israeli citizens must be condemned, and they must stop. Yet Israel also carries a big responsibility for the well-being of innocent civilians living in the occupied territories.

Norway is deeply shocked by the damage inflicted by the Israeli military attacks, in particular in Jenin. Israel has clear obligations under international law to protect civilians. The destruction of civilian and personal property is not acceptable. Norway is extremely concerned with the humanitarian consequences of the destruction inflicted upon Palestinian towns, villages and in particular the refugee camp in Jenin. Norway believes it is in the interest of both Israelis and Palestinians to find out exactly what happened during the most recent waves of fighting, not least in Jenin.

It is important to provide urgent assistance to the wounded, the homeless and the hungry, some of whom have been made refugees anew. Israel must immediately allow unhindered access for all humanitarian organizations and emergency supplies, through Israel, to the relevant parts of the Palestinian area.

In order to design an appropriate response to this humanitarian crisis, Norway, which chairs the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for the Coordination of International Assistance to Palestinians (AHLC), is hosting, in close cooperation with AHLC partners, an AHLC meeting in Oslo on 24 and 25 April. It is our hope that this meeting will clarify the most urgent needs and provide an international commitment to the rebuilding of Palestinian society.

Humanitarian assistance can minimize the suffering, but the fundamental problem — that of ending the occupation — is political. There are sufficient guidelines from international society to the parties —from the Security Council, from the "quartet" and from the United States Administration — on how to reach a ceasefire and to resume a meaningful political process. Norway supports the idea of establishing an observer mechanism if this can help the parties to reach those goals. The ideas of the Secretary-General regarding an international force are an important contribution to the discussion on how the international community can assist in finding a solution to the present crisis. A number of elements will be further clarified. However, such a force will be dependent on the consent of both parties.

Norway calls on Israel and the Palestinians to act with responsibility and to move towards a political resolution of the conflict. It is time for the parties to adopt a constructive strategy. Norway calls on Israel to immediately halt all its military operations and withdraw its forces from reoccupied Palestinian towns and villages. President Arafat and the Palestinian Authority must do their utmost to stop Palestinian terrorism. Israel must stop destroying the Palestinian police infrastructure, which undermines the long-term capacity of the Palestinian Authority to fight terrorism. President Arafat must be allowed to resume his duties as head of the Palestinian Authority.

Our objective must be the resumption of peace negotiations with the aim of realizing the international consensus on the vision of two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side within internationally recognized borders.

The Council must do what it can to support the realization of this vision. At this critical hour, the Council must act with one voice in pursuit of a new future for Palestinians and Israelis alike.

Mr. Negroponte (United States): The United States is fully committed to peace in the Middle East and we are working with all the countries that have a stake in this conflict. Secretary Powell returned from the Middle East early Thursday morning after 10 days in the region. While there, he met with the leaders of Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Israel, the Palestinian Authority, Syria and Lebanon, and with some of them

on more than one occasion. Yesterday, he met with President Bush to report on the progress achieved and on the difficult situation on the ground.

Secretary Powell made progress during his mission and I would like to take this opportunity to share some of his findings. First, Secretary Powell obtained an Israeli commitment to wind down its military operations. The Israeli Defence Forces have withdrawn from Jenin and will be pulling out of Nablus soon. President Bush publicly affirmed that the Israelis "must continue their withdrawals". Secondly, Secretary Powell obtained a clear statement from the Palestinian leadership condemning recent terrorist attacks, notably the horrific suicide bombings in Netanya and Jerusalem. Again, President Bush called on the Palestinian Authority to "act on its condemnation of terror".

As he said yesterday, Secretary Powell found broad support among Israelis, Palestinians, Arab States and members of the "quartet" for a comprehensive strategy as a way forward that comprises three key elements: first, security and freedom from terror and violence for Israelis and Palestinians alike; secondly, serious and accelerated negotiations to revive hope and lead to a political settlement; and thirdly, economic and humanitarian assistance to address the increasingly desperate conditions faced by the Palestinian people.

I must emphasize that the progress achieved should be measured against our commitment to sustained engagement with the parties and our determination to make significant progress towards peace. Our goal remains the full implementation of Security Council resolution 1402 (2002) and a just and lasting solution based on resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 1397 (2002). United States Assistant Secretary of State Burns remains in the region; the Secretary of State has stated his intention to return to the region to continue his diplomatic efforts; and Foreign Minister Shimon Peres is in Washington as we speak.

Given the complexity of the tasks ahead, we must remain focused on the region. As the Secretary-General said to the Security Council yesterday,

> "Through three recent resolutions — 1397 (2002), 1402 (2002) and 1403 (2002) — and the presidential statement of 10 April, you have clearly outlined a vision of a final settlement and the steps that should be taken to enable political negotiations to resume."

These resolutions demand an immediate cessation of all acts of violence, terror, provocation, incitement and destruction. They also contain comprehensive calls to action on the political, humanitarian and military aspects of the current crisis and provide a practical road map for moving forward. The "quartet", supported by this Council, called for an immediate Israeli withdrawal from Palestinian cities and addressed the need to halt terror and violence, the growing risk to regional security and the urgent need for economic and humanitarian assistance to the Palestinian people. They will meet again soon to discuss next steps.

The United States has pressed Israel to allow full and unimpeded access to the Jenin camp for humanitarian organizations and services. American diplomats have been working with relief organizations on the ground and access has been improved. The Israelis should allow immediate, unrestricted access to international humanitarian and aid workers, as well as to search and rescue teams. We are encouraged by the entry into the camp today of Swiss and Norwegian search-and-rescue teams.

Alleviating the situation in Jenin should be our priority humanitarian objective at this time. Further Security Council action is not the best way to meet this objective. Rather, we can make more of an impact by working directly with the parties on the ground.

We have also taken several concrete steps to address the humanitarian situation facing the Palestinian people. Last Friday President Bush authorized an additional $30 million in support of the emergency programmes of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) in the West Bank and Gaza. Moreover, our aid organization has pledged $62 million in accelerated assistance for health care, water-system repairs and emergency food aid. The United States welcomes the invitation of Norway to convene a meeting of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee next Wednesday to consider both urgent and longer-term assistance and the development and reconstruction needs of the Palestinian Authority and the Palestinian people.

My country firmly believes that the Security Council is most effective and its resolutions most meaningful when its actions are focused on areas of

convergence and agreement. When we speak with one voice and demonstrate cohesion, our words have real strength. Witness, for example, resolutions 1397 (2002), 1402 (2002) and 1403 (2002). When, instead, we are focused too narrowly on areas of difference and the condemnation of one side or another, we risk producing words that can only serve to inflame the conflict at hand. Accentuating our differences can only be counterproductive to our common purpose of bringing lasting peace to this beleaguered part of the world.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of the Russian Federation.

Despite the diplomatic efforts made by many countries, the situation in the Middle East has reached a boiling point.

The humanitarian situation in the Palestinian territories has been described by everyone as catastrophic. Representatives of the United Nations, the International Committee of the Red Cross, non-governmental organizations and the mass media all have been shaken by the tragedy that took place in the Jenin refugee camp. The Security Council must take urgent measures to remedy the terrible plight of the Palestinian population and to protect the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem as well as all other holy sites.

Members of the international community are also united in their belief that a comprehensive settlement in the region can be achieved only within the framework of political dialogue, and that the first step in this direction should be the immediate implementation of all of the provisions of Security Council resolution 1402 (2002), including a ceasefire, an end to the terror and violence, and the withdrawal of Israeli troops from the Palestinian territories. All impediments to the activities of humanitarian organizations must be removed, and the siege on Yasser Arafat's residence must be lifted, as he is the legitimate leader of the Palestinian people and must lead the efforts of the Palestinians to normalize the situation.

We deeply appreciate the efforts made by the Secretary-General in seeking a way out of the extremely dangerous situation now prevailing. We support his proposal to send an international force to the Palestinian territories. Of course, this proposal will require discussion in the Security Council, on the basis of comprehensive and complete information on the parameters of such an operation. It is of fundamental importance in the implementation of that proposal to develop common approaches on the part of all interested States and parties.

Russia, for its part, will continue to work actively with the parties to defuse the crisis as soon as possible, acting in coordination with the American co-sponsor and other participants in the "quartet" of international mediators, in close contact with the leading countries of the region. We agree with the Secretary-General that Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 1397 (2002), the Madrid quartet statement, which was supported by the Council, and the Arab peace initiative contain all the necessary elements for the collective elaboration of a comprehensive settlement that would make it possible to address the security concerns of all of the countries of the region, to ensure peaceful coexistence between Israel and a Palestinian state and to deal with the causes of the current acts of terrorism.

However, the most important step at this point is the implementation of resolution 1402 (2002). This is the position of all members of the Security Council. The joint statement of the members of the quartet was devoted to this issue, and this was also the aim of the mission to the region of the United States Secretary of State, Colin Powell. Only if this resolution is implemented will it be possible to stop the situation from spiralling even further out of control, destroying Israeli-Palestinian relations, creating a further setback for the peace process in the Middle East and causing the conflagration to spread to the entire region.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

I give the floor to the Permanent Observer of Palestine.

Mr. Al-Kidwa (Palestine): Yesterday we heard a statement by the representative of Israel, and we feel compelled to respond to one or two of the points raised in that statement, out of the many outrageous positions contained therein.

In that statement, the Israeli representative said:

> "The use of the term 'massacre' in the context of the battle that took place in Jenin is of course politically convenient for the Palestinian side. It is a distortion that attempts to create a moral equivalence between the suicide bomber,

> who deliberately targets civilians, and the soldier, whose mission is to protect against them."

Frankly, I am not aware of any people who would welcome being massacred for the sake of political convenience. I am also unable to understand how firing missiles and bulldozing homes with people still inside them could be justified by military considerations.

In any case, allow me to take a minute of the Council's time and to read a statement to which many representatives referred yesterday, which was made by the United Nations Special Coordinator, Mr. Roed-Larsen:

> "The situation is shocking and horrifying beyond belief. It looks as if an earthquake has hit the heart of the refugee camp here. I have just witnessed two brothers digging their father and five other family members out of the rubble. I witnessed a family digging out their son, who was about 12 years old, from beneath the rubble. There is a stench of decay and corpses everywhere here. The scene is absolutely unbelievable. What we are seeing here is the large-scale suffering of the whole civilian population here. No military operation could justify the suffering we are seeing here. It is not only the corpses. It is also children lacking food."

I also wish to say a word about the issue of moral equivalence. Some years ago the former Secretary of State, Mrs. Madeleine Albright, whom I highly respect, used to say that there is no moral equivalence between bombs and bulldozers, referring to Israeli settlement activities in the occupied territories. Back then we begged to differ, because settlement activities negated the present and the future of the Palestinian people as a whole. Nevertheless, we understood the logic. Today some people want us to believe that there is no moral equivalence between blood and other blood, between human loss and other human loss.

We condemn all types of loss of human life. To tell the truth, if we are to make comparisons, we also believe that what is happening on the Israeli side is much worse than what is happening on the Palestinian side. That is simply because what is happening on the Israeli side is being committed by an army — an army of a State that implements the official policies of a Government, an army whose soldiers have been committing clear, grave breaches of the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949, and clear war crimes. On the Palestinian side, there are groups committing outrageous and condemnable, illegal acts in direct contradiction to the official policy. One might add to that the fact that what is happening to the Palestinian people is happening on a much larger scale. We have many more casualties. We have many more dead. We have much more destruction. The lives of the Palestinian people as a whole are being destroyed. So please do not try to speak about moral equivalence, Mr. Representative of Israel.

We must affirm our full respect for the positions expressed by members of the Council. Nevertheless, I have to admit that we were perplexed at the comments of the representative of Bulgaria. The representative does not see the need for a new resolution. Maybe he has not heard that the relevant Security Council resolutions have not been implemented. Maybe he has not heard about the deterioration of the humanitarian situation, including in Jenin, and the need for a positive response. The Ambassador also made hesitant comments, sounding almost negative about the Secretary-General's proposal or at least about important parts of it, which would render the proposal itself dysfunctional. Frankly, we are surprised that since Bulgaria became a member of the Security Council, its delegation has not shown the expected sensitivity towards the Palestinian situation and the Palestinians' just requests of the Council. We are surprised because we are familiar with the traditionally friendly Bulgarian position. For our part, of course, we will do our best in a very amicable and politically correct way to overcome this strange situation.

We are convinced of the imperative of adopting the new resolution. We understand the hesitancy on the part of some members of the Council, and we hope that they understand the pressing need, at least from our point of view. We believe that a resolution is necessary that deals with the humanitarian situation on the ground, particularly in Jenin, including the issue of investigating what has happened in the refugee camp there and with the fact that Council resolutions 1402 (2002) and 1403 (2002) have not been implemented. In other words, at this stage we accept setting aside the issue of an international presence, leaving this important matter to the Secretary-General, his efforts and his consultations with members of the Security Council.

There is an Arab draft resolution, one which we believe is appropriate. Nevertheless, we have also noted other initiatives positively, including an initiative put forward by the delegation of the United Kingdom. Palestine, indeed the Arab Group and, of course, the Arab member of this Council, Syria, will be ready to work with all members of the Council to reach satisfactory language, language that will enable the Council to express itself and to take the necessary action in response to the humanitarian situation and to the fact that the two relevant resolutions have not yet been implemented.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I call on the representative of Israel.

Mr. Jacob (Israel): I apologize for responding at this late hour, but I am compelled to respond to some of the points raised by the Permanent Observer of Palestine.

Israeli actions in Jenin and elsewhere were undertaken reluctantly and in self-defence against an unrelenting campaign of violence and terrorism incited, supported and financed by the Palestinian Authority. They were taken only after the Palestinian Authority was given ample opportunity to fulfil its commitment and after we had exercised utmost restraint in the face of a wave of suicide-bombing massacres. We have not endeavoured to harm the Palestinian people. Rather, we have only tried to uproot the infrastructure of terror.

We deeply regret the death of any civilians, whether Israeli or Palestinian, but we maintain that primary responsibility for their deaths lies with the terrorists, who have taken up residence in civilian areas and refugee camps, in violation of international law and Security Council resolutions and in callous disregard for those whom they endangered.

We share the concern of the international community about the humanitarian situation, but, in our view, dead Israelis are also a humanitarian problem. If anyone is guilty of war crimes and terrorism, it is those elements of the Palestinian leadership that have provided the funding and the political and ideological support for terrorism. What motivates an 18-year-old girl to blow herself up in a supermarket? How long can the Council ignore the continual incitement by the Palestinian media, the education of hatred in Palestinian schools and textbooks, the repugnant embrace of death and suicide, the glorification of suicide bombers and the legitimization of terrorism by political and spiritual leaders?

For how long can we blame only the occupation? Occupation was not the problem between 1948 and 1967, and the Palestinians did not then establish a State. It was not a problem at Camp David, and still peace was rejected. The Palestinian side may have issued a condemnation of terrorism to placate Western Governments. But their actions speak louder than their words. Still, the Palestinian side chooses to place the full blame for the current crisis, not to mention the entire conflict, squarely on the shoulders of Israel, as if 54 years of rejecting Israel's very right to exist and fomenting hatred of Jews has nothing to do with the continuation of the violence and unrest in the region. In the Palestinian view, it is Israel alone that is responsible and Israel alone that had failed to take the necessary steps for peace.

But the Council has told us otherwise. The Palestinians, too, have responsibilities — even if they exhibit no intention whatsoever of abiding by them. Yesterday, Ambassador Al-Kidwa informed the Council that the Palestinians would do nothing — there would be no negotiations and no action to combat terror — until Israel fully withdraws. His statement is a clear defiance of resolution 1402 (2002), which also calls for a meaningful ceasefire and an end to terrorism and incitement and cooperation with General Zinni as reciprocal steps, which the Palestinian leadership refuses to take. Such assertions are typical and enable the Palestinian leadership to continue to perpetuate the fiction that a succession of Israeli leaders are solely to blame for the situation.

Today, it is Sharon for his refusal to make concessions to terrorism. Before him, it was Barak, who offered the Palestinians statehood in virtually all the West Bank, shared sovereignty in Jerusalem and a solution to the refugee problem, and was rewarded with terror. Before him came Netanyahu and before him Peres, both of whom were rewarded with Palestinian terror. And before them was Yitzhak Rabin. He, too, was a problem and an obstacle to peace in the region. Indeed, every Israeli leader has been an obstacle to peace.

Apparently, the only regional leader who has not been an obstacle to peace is the great liberal democrat Yasser Arafat.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): There are no further speakers on my list.

Before I close the meeting I would like to say that, as far as I understand, contacts among interested delegations have as yet not led to a situation in which the Council could directly take up consideration of a draft resolution in consultations. These contacts will continue during the lunch break, and we shall hold consultations at 4 p.m.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.